



MARYLAND
CATHOLIC
CONFERENCE

February 14, 2023

House Bill 356

**Public Institutions of Higher Education – Pregnant and Parenting Students –
Policy**

House Appropriations Committee

Position: Favorable

The Catholic Conference is the public policy representative of the three (arch)dioceses serving Maryland, which together encompass over one million Marylanders. Statewide, their parishes, schools, hospitals, and numerous charities combine to form our state’s second largest social service provider network, behind only our state government.

The Church often reminds us that we are to care for all of God’s people, especially the weakest and defenseless among us. Pregnancy support services provide care and protection for some of our society’s most vulnerable members by assisting women throughout their pregnancies and as they welcome their children into the world. HB 356 will go a long way to ensure pregnant and parenting students in higher education have a higher chance at success.

Nearly 55,000 students or one-fifth of undergraduates in Maryland are parents. Student parents tend to be older (the median age is 32), financially independent, highly motivated and earn better grades than their dependent peers. However, just 8% of single mother undergraduates will earn an AA or BA within 6 years of college enrollment (compared with 49% of non-mothers).¹

One of the most basic barriers to student parents’ education, especially for single mothers, is knowledge of their Title IX rights for accommodation on campus. Out of 31 public colleges and universities in Maryland, only a quarter describe the Title IX rights of pregnant and parenting students on their college website. Additionally, 60% of public colleges do not list lactation spaces for breastfeeding mothers.

¹ <https://iwpr.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Maryland.pdf>

Without this knowledge, student mothers may drop out of college, face discrimination, or believe their school is unsupportive, creating an off-ramp to college success rather than a bridge forward. Women of color are more likely to be student parents; 31% of Black women, 17% of mixed-race women and 16% of Latinas in college are mothers compared to 13% of White and 7% of Asian/Pacific Islander female students.²

Single mothers in Maryland who graduate with an A.A.:

- Are half as likely to live in poverty as a high school graduate

Single mothers in Maryland who graduate with a B.A.:

- Are 72% less likely to live in poverty than a high school graduate (9% vs 32%)
- Earn over \$650,000 more over their lifetime
- Save Maryland over \$40,000 in public assistance spending over their lifetime.
- Contribute nearly \$245,000 more in lifetime taxes.³

The University of Maryland System, Maryland Community Colleges, and Maryland's other public universities and colleges should imitate Frederick Community College and Montgomery College in supporting pregnant and parenting students to college success.⁴

For these reasons, the Maryland Catholic Conference asks for a favorable report on **HB 356**.

Thank you for your consideration.

² https://iwpr.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/C481_Parents-in-College-By-the-Numbers-Aspen-Ascend-and-IWPR.pdf

³ <https://iwpr.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Maryland.pdf>

⁴ <https://www.montgomerycollege.edu/policies-and-procedures/title-ix/pregnant-parenting-students.html>